

Message Text

SECRET

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ORIGIN NODS-00

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DRAFTED BY PM/NPP-ALOCKE
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S/AS - RKELLEY
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TO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS
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INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY
WHITE HOUSE

S E C R E T STATE 069192

NODIS
CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MNUC, PARM, SF

SUBJECT: SOVIET NOTE ON SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR SITUATION

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1. WE RECENTLY RECEIVED A SOVIET COMMUNICATION, IN THE FORM OF AN "ORAL MESSAGE" FROM BREZHNEV TO PRESIDENT CARTER, WHICH EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER CONTINUED ACTIVITY IN SOUTH AFRICA WHICH IT CHARACTERIZES AS ENHANCING SOUTH AFRICA'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS POTENTIAL. THE MESSAGE STATED THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE DATA THAT SOUTH AFRICA IS CONTINUING WORK TO DEVELOP NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND PREPARE TEST EXPLOSIVES; THAT

CONSTRUCTION OF A SECOND TEST SITE IS UNDER WAY; AND REFERRED TO INFORMATION THAT AN INDUSTRIAL REACTOR FOR PLUTONIUM PRODUCTION IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION, AND A LARGE ENRICHMENT FACILITY IS PLANNED. IT NOTES THE NEED TO TAKE ALL POSSIBLE MEASURES TO PREVENT DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN SOUTH AFRICA, TO BRING SOUTH AFRICA INTO THE NPT, AND TO BRING ALL SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR ACTIVITIES UNDER IAEA SAFEGUARDS. IN THIS CONNECTION, "THE POSSIBILITIES OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL SHOULD ALSO BE USED". WE UNDERSTAND THAT NOTES RECEIVED BY THE UK, FRENCH, AND FRG GOVERNMENTS ARE SIMILAR IN SUBSTANCE.

2. ACTION ADDRESSEES SHOULD INFORM HOST GOVERNMENTS AT AN APPROPRIATELY HIGH LEVEL THAT ON MARCH 16 WE RESPONDED TO THE SOVIET NOTE IN A NON-PAPER ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES:

-- WE HAVE NO INFORMATION THAT A NEW AND SEPARATE TEST SITE IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION OR THAT SIGNIFICANT NEW TEST-RELATED ACTIVITY IS BEING UNDERTAKEN AT THE KALAHARI SITE.

-- WE HAVE NO INFORMATION WHICH LEADS US TO BELIEVE THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT IS PROCEEDING TO ACT CONTRARY TO ITS ASSURANCES THAT IT WILL NOT PRODUCE OR TEST A NUCLEAR EXPLOSIVE.

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-- WE HAVE NO INFORMATION ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF REACTORS DEDICATED TO PLUTONIUM PRODUCTION; THE TWO POWER REACTORS BEING BUILT AT KOEBURG WILL BE SUBJECT TO IAEA SAFEGUARDS.

-- WE CONTINUE TO BE CONCERNED WITH THE SITUATION. WE WOULD BE PLEASED TO RECEIVE ANY INFORMATION YOU HAVE THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT IS WORKING ON A SECOND TEST RANGE OR BUILDING A REACTOR DEDICATED TO PLUTONIUM PRODUCTION.

-- WE ARE WORKING TOWARD HAVING SOUTH AFRICA ADHERE TO THE TREATY ON THE NONPROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND ALL SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR ACTIVITIES BROUGHT UNDER FULL IAEA SAFEGUARDS.

-- A TEAM OF US EXPERTS RECENTLY VISITED SOUTH AFRICA FOR TECHNICAL DISCUSSIONS ON HOW TO ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES. IN PARTICULAR THE TEAM PRESENTED A PROPOSAL FOR EARLY ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE AT THE VALINDABA ENRICHMENT FACILITY TO DEVELOP A

SAFEGUARD PROGRAM ADMINISTERED BY IAEA.

-- WHILE WE WOULD NOT RULE OUT EVENTUAL RECOURSE TO THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT COUNCIL ACTION AT THIS TIME WOULD BE HELPFUL IN REALIZING OUR SHARED OBJECTIVES.

-- WE LOOK FORWARD TO CONTINUING THE CONSTRUCTIVE EXCHANGE ON THIS SUBJECT AND HOPE THAT YOU WILL CONSULT WITH US PRIOR TO TAKING FURTHER STEPS.

IN AN ADDITIONAL ORAL POINT, WE POINTED OUT THAT SOVIET MEDIA REPORTS LIKE THE ONE IN PRAVDA MARCH 8 WHICH CLAIM THAT THE US AND NATO COUNTRIES ARE COLLABORATING IN
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VIOLATION OF UN RESOLUTIONS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA'S NUCLEAR POTENTIAL ARE INCORRECT AND UNHELPFUL.

3. ACTION ADDRESSEES MAY ALSO, AS APPROPRIATE, DRAW ON THE FOLLOWING TO PROVIDE HOST GOVERNMENTS WITH ADDITIONAL DETAIL ON RECENT VISIT OF US NUCLEAR TECHNICAL TEAM TO SOUTH AFRICA. TEAM SPENT TWO WEEKS IN SOUTH AFRICA (FEB. 18 - MARCH 4) AND ITS ACTIVITIES PROCEEDED ALONG THE LINES OF THE PREVIOUS BRIEFING ON THE SUBJECT (STATE 9389 NODIS, NOTAL). TEAM'S DISCUSSIONS WERE PRIMARILY WITH SENIOR STAFF OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN ATOMIC ENERGY BOARD, AND CENTERED ON OUR PROPOSALS FOR FUELING THE SAFARI RESEARCH REACTOR WITH LOWER ENRICHED URANIUM AND FOR DEVELOPING A SAFEGUARDS R AND D PROGRAM AT THE VALINDABA ENRICHMENT PLANT. PROPOSALS WERE RECEIVED AT THE TECHNICAL LEVEL WITH COURTESY AND INTEREST, BUT THE TEAM WAS INFORMED THAT A FORMAL REACTION TO THE US PROPOSALS MUST COME FROM THE POLITICAL SIDE OF THE SAG.

4. SOUTH AFRICANS PROVIDED LITTLE OR NO INFORMATION WHICH WOULD OCCASION REVISING OUR PROPOSALS, PARTICULARLY THAT CONCERNING ENRICHMENT PLANT SAFEGUARDS, AND WE JUDGE THAT PROVISION OF SUCH INFORMATION IS SUBJECT TO A SAG DECISION IN PRINCIPLE ON WHETHER OUR PROPOSALS CONSTITUTE IN ITS VIEW A BASIS FOR PROCEEDING TOWARD POLITICAL-LEVEL DISCUSSIONS ON THE NUCLEAR ISSUE. WE BELIEVE THAT THE SOUTH AFRICANS AT THE TECHNICAL LEVEL ARE SATISFIED THAT OUR PROPOSALS ARE TECHNICALLY SOUND, BUT WE OBTAINED NO HINT AS TO HOW THE POLITICAL LEVELS WILL REACT. WE NOW PROPOSE TO WAIT A REASONABLE LENGTH OF TIME (FYI: PERHAPS A FEW WEEKS) FOR A FORMAL RESPONSE FROM THE SAG. WE WILL TAKE THAT RESPONSE INTO ACCOUNT IN ASSESSING WHETHER A FOLLOW-ON DISCUSSION AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL WOULD BE
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PRODUCTIVE. WE WILL ALSO WISH TO REMAIN IN CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH CONCERNED CAPITALS, AND TO TAKE THEIR VIEWS INTO ACCOUNT IN DEVELOPMENT OF NEXT STEPS.

5. WE ARE PREPARED TO PROVIDE GREATER DETAIL ON THE NATURE OF OUR PROPOSALS IF DESIRED, BUT GIVEN THEIR COMPLEXITY AND LENGTH, WOULD PREFER TO DO SO IN WASHINGTON WHERE RELEVANT US EXPERTS ARE AVAILABLE. VANCE

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